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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0913
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0016
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0011
RUEHFR/USMISSION UNESCO PARIS FR IMMEDIATE 0001
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001203

SIPDIS
DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/E, AND IO/UNP
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA-WATCHER
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/10/13
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [DJ](#) [FR](#) [XA](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTIAN CANDIDACY FOR UNESCO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

REF: 10/05/2009 WONG-GAYTON HAMIEL EMAIL

CLASSIFIED BY: Eric Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S.
Embassy, Djibouti; REASON: 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST. Djibouti requests USG support for its candidacy for the UNESCO Executive Board. According to UNESCO's website, the election of Members of the Executive Board will occur on October 14, with ballots distributed the evening of October 13. Post strongly recommends USG support for Djibouti's candidacy. A moderate Muslim country and a member of UNESCO since 1989, Djibouti is a strong ally of the United States, and an active member of la Francophonie, the League of Arab States, and the African Union. Djibouti currently hosts the secretariat of the six-nation Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and is a key strategic partner of the United States, Japan, France, and other European Union members. According to the Djiboutian foreign ministry, France is among those already supporting Djibouti's candidacy. Posts urges USG advocacy for Djibouti's candidacy, and requests guidance on a response to Djibouti's MFA. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

¶2. (SBU) On October 5, Djibouti's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Post by formal diplomatic note of its candidacy for the UNESCO Executive Council (forwarded to AF/E). Embassy's informal translation of French-language original follows.

BEGIN TEXT OF EMBASSY TRANSLATION.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States in Djibouti and has the honor to announce that the Djiboutian Government has decided to present its candidacy as a member of the UNESCO Executive Council, during the elections to be held during the 35th Session of the UNESCO General Conference to be held in October 2009.

The Djiboutian Government reaffirms its commitments and ideals to UNESCO, an important organ of the United Nations System. In presenting its candidacy for the Executive Council, it intends to make its contribution through active involvement in its program.

The Republic of Djibouti would be honored to serve this Council,

given that it has never been a member since joining UNESCO.

The Government of Djibouti would be grateful to the U.S. Government for supporting its candidacy in the Council elections.

(COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING.)

END TEXT OF EMBASSY TRANSLATION.

FRANCE REPORTEDLY SUPPORTS DJIBOUTI'S CANDIDACY

¶3. (C) On October 13, MFA Director for Bilateral Affairs, Mohammad Ali Hassan, reiterated the GODJ's request for USG support of its candidacy. He asserted that France was giving Djibouti "full support". USG support was critical, he added, as the Africa group was "divided." Hassan reported that Djibouti's President Ismail

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Omar Guelleh and Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Youssouf would be in Paris for the election, at the invitation of UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura.

¶4. (U) NOTE. Djibouti is presumably seeking a seat in Group V(a) of the Executive Board, which includes 7 sub-Saharan African states whose membership expires in 2009: Benin, DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda. Group V(b) includes 3 Arab or north African states whose membership expires in 2009: Algeria, Egypt, and Lebanon. END NOTE.

¶5. (U) Djibouti is hosting several events in the near term, in conjunction with UNESCO. These include:

-- a "Policy Dialogue between the Business Community of the region and the Executive Committee of the Greater Horn Horizon Forum," featuring UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, Pierre Sane;

-- a High-Level Round Table on Somalia moderated by the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, and featuring presentations by the AU, LAS, IGAD, and the UN SRSG for Somalia;

-- and a "Conference on Identity, Citizenship and Regional Integration in the Horn of Africa."

¶6. (C) COMMENT. Post strongly recommends USG support for Djibouti's candidacy. A key strategic ally in the Horn of Africa, the GODJ recently renewed a bilateral agreement allowing the USG continued use of Camp Lemonnier-the only U.S. military base in Africa, and headquarters to more than 2,300 U.S. and coalition troops promoting security cooperation through U.S. Africa Command's Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). A moderate Muslim country, Djibouti promotes regional security and key U.S. interests, by hosting U.S. and French military bases, a EU naval task force, and Japanese forces deployed to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. Djibouti played an instrumental role in hosting

Somali peace talks in 2008 and early 2009 under the auspices of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (UN SRSG) for Somalia. Domestically, the GODJ devotes one-quarter of its national budget to education, particularly primary education, and over a tenth to health care. END COMMENT.
SWAN